

Hughes's Speech of Acceptance

[Charles Evans Hughes accepted the republican presidential nomination in a speech delivered in Carnegie hall, New York city, Monday night, July 31. The complete text of the address, as printed in the Congressional Record, is reproduced below.—Ed.]

Mr. Hughes said:

Senator Harding, members of the notification committee, and fellow citizens, this occasion is more than a mere ceremony of notification. We are not here to indulge in formal expressions. We come to state in a plain and direct manner our faith, our purpose, and our pledge. This representative gathering is a happy augury. It means the strength of reunion. It means that the party of Lincoln is restored, alert, effective. It means the unity of a common perception of paramount national needs. It means that we are neither deceived nor benumbed by abnormal conditions.

We know that we are in a critical period, perhaps more critical than any period since the Civil war. We need a dominant sense of national unity; the exercise of our best constructive powers; the vigor and resourcefulness of a quickened America. We desire that the republican party as a great liberal party shall be the agency of national achievement, the organ of the effective expression of dominant Americanism. What do I mean by that?

THE EXPRESSION OF AMERICANISM

I mean America conscious of power, awake to obligation, erect in self-respect, prepared for every emergency, devoted to the ideals of peace, instinct with the spirit of human brotherhood, safeguarding both individual opportunity and the public interest, maintaining a well-ordered constitutional system adapted to local self-government without the sacrifice of essential national authority, appreciating the necessity of stability, expert knowledge, and thorough organization as the indispensable condition of security and progress; a country loved by its citizens with a patriotic fervor permitting no division in their allegiance and no rivals in their affection—I mean America first and America efficient. It is in this spirit that I respond to your summons.

Our foreign relations have assumed grave importance in the last three years. The conduct of diplomatic intercourse is in the keeping of the Executive. It rests chiefly with him whether we shall show competence or incompetence; whether the national honor shall be maintained; whether our prestige and influence shall be lowered or advanced. What is the record of the administration? The first duty of the Executive was to command the respect of the world by the personnel of our state department and our representation abroad. No party exigency could excuse the nonperformance of this obvious obligation. Still, after making every allowance for certain commendable appointments, it is apparent that this obligation was not performed.

WEAKNESS AND INEXPERTNESS

At the very beginning of the present administration, where in the direction of diplomatic intercourse there should have been conspicuous strength and expertness, we had weakness and inexpertness. Instead of assuring respect we invited distrust of our competence and speculation as to our capacity for firmness and decision, thus entailing many difficulties which otherwise easily could have been escaped. Then in numerous instances, notably in Latin America, where such a course was particularly reprehensible, and where we desire to encourage the most friendly relations, men of long diplomatic experience whose knowledge and training were of especial value to the country were retired from the service apparently for no other reason than to meet partisan demands in the appointment of inexperienced persons.

Where, as in Santo Domingo, we had assumed an important special trust in the interest of its people, that trust was shockingly betrayed in order to satisfy "deserving democrats." The record showing the administration's disregard of its responsibilities with respect to our representation in diplomacy is an open book, and the specifications may easily be had. It is a record revealing professions belied. It is a dismal record to those believing in Americanism. Take, for example, the withdrawal of Ambassador Herrick from France. There he stood, in the midst of alarms, the very embodiment of courage, of poise, of executive capacity, universally trusted

and beloved. No diplomat ever won more completely the affections of a foreign people; and there was no better fortune for this country than to have at the capital of any one of the belligerent nations a representative thus esteemed.

WHAT REMOVING HERRICK MEANT

Yet the administration permitted itself to supersede him. The point is not that the man was Ambassador Herrick, or that the nation was France, but that we invited the attention of the world to the inexcusable yielding of national interest to partisan expediency. It was a lamentable sacrifice of international repute. If we would have the esteem of foreign nations, we must deserve it. We must show our regard for special knowledge and experience. I propose that we shall make the agencies of our diplomatic intercourse in every nation worthy of the American name. The dealings of the administration with Mexico constitute a confused chapter of blunders. We have not helped Mexico. She lies prostrate, impoverished, famine stricken, overwhelmed with the woes and outrages of internecine strife, the helpless victim of a condition of anarchy which the course of the administration only served to promote. For ourselves, we have witnessed the murder of our citizens and the destruction of their property. We have made enemies, not friends. Instead of commanding respect and deserving good will by sincerity, firmness, and consistency, we provoked misapprehension and deep resentment.

In the light of the conduct of the administration no one could understand its professions. Degrading interference, we interfered most exasperatingly. We have not even kept out of actual conflict, and the soil of Mexico is stained with the blood of our soldiers. We have resorted to physical invasion, only to retire without gaining the professed object. It is a record which can not be examined without a profound sense of humiliation.

THE CASE OF HUERTA

When the administration came into power Huerta was exercising authority as provisional president of Mexico. He was certainly in fact the head of the government of Mexico. Whether or not he should be recognized was a question to be determined in the exercise of sound discretion, but according to correct principles. The President was entitled to be assured that there was at least a de facto government; that international obligations would be performed; that the lives and property of American citizens would have proper protection. To attempt, however, to control the domestic concerns of Mexico was simply intervention, not less so because disclaimed.

The height of folly was to have a vacillating and ineffective intervention, which could only evoke bitterness and contempt, which would fail to pacify the country and to assure peace and prosperity under a stable government. If crimes were committed, we do not palliate them. We make no defense of Huerta. But the administration had nothing to do with the moral character of Huerta, if in fact he represented the government of Mexico. We shall never worthily prosecute our unselfish aims or serve humanity by wrong headedness. So far as the character of Huerta is concerned, the hollowness of the pretensions on this score is revealed by the administration's subsequent patronage of Villa—whose qualifications as an assassin are indisputable—whom apparently the administration was ready to recognize had he achieved his end and fulfilled what then seemed to be its hope.

JOHN LIND'S MISSION

The question is not as to the nonrecognition of Huerta. The administration did not content itself with refusing to recognize Huerta, who was recognized by Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Spain, and Japan. The administration undertook to destroy Huerta, to control Mexican politics, even to deny Huerta the right to be a candidate for the office of president at the election the administration demanded. With what bewilderment must the Mexicans have regarded our assertion of their right to manage their own affairs. In the summer of 1913, John Lind was dispatched to the City of Mexico as the President's "personal spokesman and representative" to the unrecognized Huerta, in order to demand that the latter eliminate himself. It was an unjustifiable mission, most offensive to a sensitive people. John Lind lingered irritatingly. The ad-

ministration continued to direct its efforts at the destruction of the only government Mexico had. In the spring of 1914 occurred the capture of Vera Cruz. Men from one of our ships had been arrested at Tampico and had been discharged with an apology. But our admiral demanded a salute, which was refused. Thereupon the President went to congress, asking authority to use the armed forces of the United States. Without waiting for the passage of the resolution, Vera Cruz was seized. It appeared that a shipload of ammunition for Huerta was about to enter that port. There was a natural opposition to this invasion, and a battle occurred, in which 19 Americans and over a hundred Mexicans were killed. This, of course, was war. Our dead soldiers were praised for dying like heroes in a war of service. Later we retired from Vera Cruz, giving up this noble warfare.

DID NOT GET THE SALUTE

We had not obtained the salute which was demanded. We had not obtained reparation for affronts. The ship with ammunition which could not land at Vera Cruz had soon landed at another port, and its cargo was delivered to Huerta without interference. Recently the naked truth was admitted by a cabinet officer. We are now informed that "we did not go to Vera Cruz to force Huerta to salute the flag." We are told that we went there "to show Mexico that we were in earnest in our demand that Huerta must go." That is, we seized Vera Cruz to depose Huerta. The question of the salute was a mere pretext.

Meanwhile the administration utterly failed to perform its obvious duty to secure protection for the lives and property of our citizens. It is most unworthy to slur those who have investments in Mexico in order to escape a condemnation for the nonperformance of this duty. There can be no such escape, for we have no debate, and there can be no debate, as to the existence of this duty on the part of our government. Let me quote the words of the democratic platform of 1912:

"The constitutional rights of American citizens should protect them on our borders and go with them throughout the world, and every American citizen residing or having property in any foreign country is entitled to and must be given the full protection of the United States government, both for himself and his property."

The bitter hatred aroused by the course of the administration multiplied outrages, while our failure to afford protection to our citizens evoked the scorn and contempt of Mexicans. Consider the ignominious incident at Tampico in connection with the capture of Vera Cruz. In the midst of the greatest danger to the hundreds of Americans congregated at Tampico our ships which were in the harbor were withdrawn and our citizens were saved only by the intervention of German officers and were taken away by British and German ships. The official excuse of the secretary of the navy is an extraordinary commentary.

NAVAL COMMANDER'S DILEMMA

Our ships, it seems, had been ordered to Vera Cruz, but as it appeared that they were not needed the order was rescinded. Then, we are told, our admiral was faced with this remarkable dilemma: If he attempted to go up the river at Tampico and take our citizens on board, the word of "aggressive action," as the secretary called it, "would have spread to the surrounding country," and it was "almost certain that reprisals on American citizens would have followed and lives would have been lost." We had so incensed the Mexicans that we could not rescue our own citizens at Tampico, save at the risk of the murder of others. We must take Vera Cruz to get Huerta out of office and trust to other nations to get our own citizens out of peril. What a travesty of international policy.

Destroying the government of Huerta, we left Mexico to the ravages of revolution. I shall not attempt to narrate the sickening story of the barbarities committed, of the carnival of murder and lust. We were then told that Mexico was entitled to spill as much blood as she pleased to settle her own affairs. The administration vacillated with respect to the embargo on the export of arms and munitions to Mexico. Under the resolution of 1912 President Taft had laid such an embargo. In August, 1913, President Wilson stated that he deemed it his duty to see that neither side to the struggle in Mexico should receive any assistance from this side of the border, and that the export of all arms and munitions to Mexico would be forbidden.

But in February, 1914, the embargo was lifted. In April, 1914, the embargo was restored.